



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION
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Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into access to services
and information in Auslan

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**Submission to Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion
Inquiry into access to services and information in Auslan
Belinda Dawson – private capacity**

I live and grew up in Canberra. I moved here from Tamora (NSW) when I was about three. I was born profoundly Deaf. I want to recount some of my experiences as a Deaf person in the ACT. I want to tell you about some of my experiences from the past.

One experience was at a bank. I went into the Branch and there was a substantial queue. I moved into the queue and waited. It was very busy. I was continually scanning the tellers' faces to see if anyone had called 'next'. A woman behind me pushed me quite hard and gestured aggressively to move forward in line. This was humiliating.

At the same bank, I was in a queue and a man standing behind me hit me in the head with a folder I was using to get my attention, to let me know the next teller was available. This sort of reaction to my not responding to an indication that my turn was next is symptomatic about the community's lack of awareness about Deaf people.

There are people in the community who will just tap you lightly or get into your peripheral vision, but there are others who will behave quite aggressively—like in the examples outlined above.

I also experienced significant bullying from some other staff members at one of my places of employment. I suffered quite traumatically because of this. Awareness of Deafness in the workplace is very important.

I went through the mainstream education system initially, and afterward to a Deaf school. When I was a young girl, we were forced to sit on our hands and only lip read. We weren't allowed to use signed speech.

I went to another boarding school—a school for Deaf girls—and learned cued speech. This is not sign language. I then came back to an oral education. The first time I saw sign language was with an interpreter and her husband, and their friends.

Some friends from my school didn't sign, but we developed a signing system because we couldn't otherwise understand each other. In this regard I had a bit of introduction to a signing system.